

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 11-14-23

7:30-9:00am

In Attendance: **Diane Starkovich, Julie Broom, Karen Vogtner, Stacy Lewis-Chair, Brian Hershberger-Vice-Chair, Maureen McAbee, Michelle Raney, Jennifer Prindiville, Brad Wilson, Patrick Lowther, Joey Nordmark, Pamela Tennell, Fr. Valery Akoh. Absent: John Cryer, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Beth Morrison, Kevin Murray.**

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Stacy Lewis called the meeting to order and asked everyone to recite the Mission Statement. Following the mission statement Diane led the council in an opening prayer. Stacy then requested everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of two new members in attendance today: Pamela Tennell and Fr. Valery Akoh.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Stacy asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was approved and seconded.

- **Approval of the August 22, 2023 Minutes**

Stacy asked if there were any changes to the August 2023 ASAC minutes. With no changes, the motion to approve the minutes was given and seconded.

- **Proposed Extreme Weather Policy – Patrick Lowther**

Patrick said he hoped everyone was able to review the proposed Extreme Weather Policy. This is a new policy in which principals gave input and the policy committee looked at other extreme weather policies presently in place at surrounding county school systems. Brian Hershberger asked if the High Schools would still be governed by the GHSA. Patrick said the high schools will continue to be governed by the GHSA and that this policy will only apply to Elementary Schools. In addition, if an elementary student is at a high school for an event, the new policy would need to be implemented for that elementary student rather than the GHSA policy. Diane mentioned that this policy also includes the AQI (Air Quality Index) graph.

Diane explained that the next step in getting this policy officially approved is for this council to present a recommendation to the Archbishop. Stacy then asked the council for a vote to recommend the proposed policy as it is written. All were in favor of recommending this Extreme Weather Policy for Archbishop's approval as written by the Policy Committee.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane said the ASAC By-laws have been updated and will be loaded onto the Office of Catholic Schools section of the Archdiocese website for all of you to review. You will be able can access them at <https://archatl.com/offices/catholic-schools/archdiocesan-school-advisory-council/>.

The Blue Ribbon Ceremony in Washington D. C. is Wednesday through Friday of this week and two of our schools will be honored: Blessed Trinity High School for its second Blue Ribbon Award and Saint Jude the Apostle for its third.

CLS (Catholic Leadership Summit) was held in Raleigh, NC on October 22-25. Diane and Julie attended and Diane said it was quite affirming to see how we stand amongst other dioceses. Next year's CLS will be in Seattle, WA.

The BT president search committee is moving forward with two candidates. The interview committee will meet soon to go over videos of the two candidates responding to key questions. The next step will be zoom interviews that last about 2 ½ hours each in early December. Following the zoom interviews the remaining candidate/s will spend a day on the BT campus. The goal is to have a president installed by January or February, if possible.

Diane invited everyone to the 16th Annual Archbishop's Education Mass and Celebration on January 27, 2024 at St. Peter Chanel Church in Roswell. An honoree will be celebrated from each of our schools. Also being honored that evening is Dr. Jamie Arthur from Queen of Angels School who was selected as Principal of the Year and Teresa Barnhill from St. Michael the Archangel Parish as Preschool Director of the Year. After the 6pm Mass and Awards ceremony, there will be a reception in McNamee Hall with heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks.

Diane told the council that all of the viability indices are in and that she will be working on correcting them soon. She asked the council to think about whether it would be a good idea to ask the schools that have been in the "viability questioned" or "fragile" category for more than one year to come and present their plan in moving forward. Diane said she is seeing a lack of urgency with some of the schools and thinks they could benefit from this review. Brian Hershberger suggested that those visiting schools that are questionable or fragile to prepare a set of questions to present while in attendance at the meeting. Also suggested was to have the schools in the healthy category mentor schools more fragile. A discussion followed.

Lastly, Diane stated that a confidentiality statement is now being drafted for the ASAC council members to sign as well as all the school council members. Before the January meeting all members will receive an electronic version and Diane asked for all to please sign the statement and bring it with them to the January meeting.

Diane asked if there were any questions or comments on her report. There was a comment that this year's advisory council in-service was one of the best in recent history. Diane mentioned that the feedback was very positive. The breakout presentations were especially appreciated as well as the police officer speaking on school safety.

- **Committee Reports**

Marketing Committee – Joey Nordmark

The marketing committee was asked to evaluate and provide feedback on the current marketing plans both at St. Mary's of Rome and St. Mary's of Fayetteville. The marketing committee evaluated both documents, met to discuss observations, and to decide on next steps in terms of deeper evaluations and/or implementation of initiatives.

St. Mary's of Fayetteville: Overall a very good starting point in terms of focus areas. The recently revamped website is attractive and will help promote the school externally. The tactics within the plan

appeared to contain solid focus areas: Data collection, Recruitment, Marketing tactics, etc. The STEM program felt a little under-represented in the plan and on the website and this feels like an opportunity. Another aspect that seemed to be under-played or not represented is the tie into local businesses or business development with community leaders.

Next Steps: Meet with the Principal McPherson, Advisory Council Marketing Lead, Director of Admissions to better understand tactical execution and unique challenges. Additionally, it would be helpful to understand the local Advisory Council's engagement around marketing.

St. Mary's of Rome: The current execution of the marketing playbook is challenging to assess. What was provided felt more like a framework of a marketing plan vs. the actual plan. This was more of an outline of ideas and concepts such as "build an annual calendar" vs. the actual calendar.

Next Steps: Meet with Principal Rittgers, Advisory Council Marketing Lead, Director of Admissions to review actual playbook, tactics, Advisory Council engagement, etc.

Marketing Plans in General: The review of the St. Mary's marketing documents led to a broader conversation regarding Catholic Schools and each school's approach. There were common themes (i.e. data collection, digital presence, parent advisory & ambassadors, faculty engagement, event schedule, and community engagement) and observations that seem to exist in both schools marketing plans/outlines. One can only assume that those themes exist in other playbooks as well. This conversation led to the idea that the committee should gather and evaluate all of the current playbooks. This will allow the committee to identify best practices, common themes, focus areas, and opportunities. Think of this as a traditional SWOT analysis.

The ASAC Website and log-in has been shared with the committee members to begin reviewing the most recent toolkit (2016) and make recommendations on revisions.

Next Steps include assigning each committee member a set of schools to contact and collect playbooks. The goal is to complete this task prior to the beginning of Winter Break (December 18).

Diane asked Joey if he and the Marketing committee would evaluate each school's website and check for ease in navigating. Joey said they will definitely review each website and report back to Diane with suggestions on improvement. It was brought up that social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, are being utilized more by younger parents to get information. A discussion followed.

Stacy asked Maureen McAbee to give an update on the school advisory council meetings. Maureen thanked all those who have already visited schools thus far and said that all of the schools have been or will be visited by an ASAC member. A reminder was given that each member should sign up to visit two schools and it should not be a school they are affiliated with. Diane suggested that new members should have a more seasoned member go with them for the first visit.

Maureen made a suggestion for the benefit of the Nominating Committee to create a recruitment blurb to be mentioned during the various school visits. There will be five members rolling off the ASAC council at the end of this school year and this could assist in recruitment of new members. A discussion followed about possible additional training for new members.

Strategic Planning Committee Update: Diane said the present strategic plan expires in 2023 and with a new superintendent coming in 2024 it may not be wise to put a new six year strategic plan in place. There is collective data obtained from surveys as well as from the accreditation process that can be very beneficial for future planning but the new superintendent may wish to be involved in the process of putting in place a new strategic plan. For now, an update rather than a new plan would be more appropriate. It was also suggested that a three-year plan rather than a six-year plan would be preferable.

Finance Committee: Stacy asked Brad to give the Finance Committee report. Brad said he wants every member to be ambassadors for GRACE Scholars. The parishes recently had a GRACE weekend to bring awareness to this most important tool in growing our schools. Brad said there is a small chance that school vouchers get through to the Georgia Legislature this year.

Teacher Pay: Brad proposed to lock our teacher salaries in at 85% of the public school systems' average with a one year look back. He passed out a spreadsheet showing the breakdown on the public school averages and explained the calculation to bring our teacher pay up to meet that 85%. The average increase for a teacher with a BA/BS degree will be \$3,907 and with a master's degree the average increase will be \$4,354. Next, Brad explained the procedure in figuring out each school's tuition increase, which will be between a 3-5% increase depending on the particular school's budget.

The second proposal from the finance committee for next school year is that in addition to contractual employees getting a 50% reduction in tuition (which went into effect for the current school year), non-contractual employees will receive a 10% reduction in tuition. Stacy asked if all were in favor of these two recommendations from the finance committee (teacher pay increases and tuition reduction for non-contractual employees for the 2024-2025 school year). All were in favor of the said proposals. Next step is to present these to the Archbishop for approval.

Tuition Block Grants: Brad then went on to explain the block grants for 2024-2025 and provided a spreadsheet showing the award and change from previous years. This block grant comes from the 3% assessment from parishes in the archdiocese and is provided to the schools as financial aid based on need. All schools will receive some financial aid out of the \$2.88 million block grant total. This amount awarded to the schools is paid out over a 10-month period and can only be used toward financial aid for Catholic students with a parish verification form on file. Families requesting financial aid have to reapply and qualify every year.

- **Accreditation Team Interviews – Monday, February 12, 2024**

Diane reminded everyone to be available on February 12th for an interview with the visting accreditation team. It will last about 45 minutes and the exact time will be advised. A series of questions will be asked regarding their role as Archdiocesan Schools Advisory Council members.

Brad asked Fr. Valery, pastor of St. Matthew where Our Lady of Victory was previously located, what he would like to see happen to have more of his families enrolled at St. Mary's Academy. Fr. Valery suggested affordable summer programs at St. Mary's Academy where his families could attend and become familiar with the school. He also suggested that St. Mary's staff come and speak at the masses and invite families to come visit and raise awareness of the school. Brad suggested having a deanery

meeting on the campus of St. Mary's Academy so that the pastors could tour the school and see first-hand all it has to offer and ultimately get involved in promoting the school to their parishioners.

- **New Business**

Policy for Tuition Payment Plans: Diane said she has put a committee together to put in place this policy on tuition payment plans. The goal is to provide consistency among the schools. This will be worked on after the beginning of the new year.

Superintendent Search Update: Diane said the only update is that Bishop Konzen met with the Archdiocesan Elementary and High School principals for about an hour at the last principals' meeting while Diane, Julie and Karen left the room. The principals gave their frank opinions as to what they desire going forward. Diane was unaware at this time if a search will be conducted.

Meitler Study Updates: Diane said 800 surveys are in and phase two will now begin. The most likely location for the new school will be Flowery Branch.

Feedback from All Schools' Advisory Council In-Service: Based on the results of the exit survey at the in-service a few suggested holding this in-service on a weeknight instead of a Saturday morning. Diane asked if anyone sees the need to change the in-service to a weeknight instead of a Saturday morning in September. The overall opinion was that a weeknight would be harder for most so the decision was to keep it on a Saturday morning.

- **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date – January 9, 2024**

Stacy asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was given and seconded. Next meeting date is Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 7:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist